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SUBJECT: INFORMATION MINISTER BACKTRACKS ON MEDIA BAN

REF: KINSHASA 234

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: The DRC's information minister on February 16 rescinded an order he issued in January which banned community radio stations from broadcasting political news. END SUMMARY.

#### Information Minister Backtracks

[1](#)2. (U) Minister of Press and Information Henri Mova Sakanyi announced February 16 that community radio stations will again be allowed to broadcast political news, and that his ministry will soon issue new charters for these stations. Mova made the announcement during a meeting with Freddy Mulongo, president of the Association of Congolese Community Radio Stations (ARCO). In addition to rescinding his ban, Mova also promised to ask provincial governors to cease harassing stations in their provinces.

[1](#)3. (U) ARCO member stations suspended operations on February 8 to protest Mova's January 18 order prohibiting community and religious stations from broadcasting both political news and call-in shows (reftel). The stations threatened another such protest on February 23, but in light of Mova's decision to rescind his order Mulongo indicated that ARCO will probably cancel its planned "Day of Silence" on February 23.

#### Media Authority at Odds with Minister

[1](#)4. (U) Tensions between Mova and Modeste Mutinga, president of the High Media Authority (HAM, a public body independent of the Ministry of Press and Information), continue. The February 18 edition of "Le Potentiel" prominently featured an account of a meeting between the HAM and President of the National Assembly Oliver Kamitatu. (Note: Mutinga was the longtime editor of "Le Potentiel," one of the more respected newspapers in Kinshasa.) According to the article, Kamitatu characterized the dispute between Mova and the HAM as one between one lone individual (Mova) and an institution of the transitional government (HAM), and said "it's very discouraging to see an intellectual oppose an institution." Kamitatu indicated that in the case of a conflict between an individual and an institution, the Senate would have to intervene.

#### COMMENT

[1](#)5. (SBU) Mova appears to be beating a hasty retreat in the face of strong and sustained reaction against his decree of January 18. Mutinga appears to be pressing the attack, so we can expect to see more critical comments in the coming weeks. End comment.

[1](#)6. (U) Bujumbura minimize considered.  
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